

MAKE SMOKING HISTORY[®]

Facts on Smoking and Lung Cancer

About Lung Cancer

- Lung cancer is one of the most common cancers in Australia.
- In Australia in 2003, it was the fourth most commonly occurring cancer in men (5,281 new cases) and in women (2,968 new cases).¹
- In Australia in 2003, the incidence of lung cancer was 13% higher (3.1% in males and 34% in females) than in 1993.¹
- In Western Australia in 2006, there were 546 new cases of lung cancer in men and 329 in women.²
- Lung cancer is a leading cause of cancer death in Australia.
- In Australia in 2003 it was the most common cause of cancer death in men (4,506 deaths) and the second most common in women, after breast cancer (2,482 and 2,710 deaths respectively).¹
- In Australia between 1993 and 2003, the male lung cancer death rate declined by 14%, while the rate for females increased by 6.7%.¹
- In Western Australia in 2006 lung cancer was the leading cause of cancer death for both men and women, with 458 lung cancer deaths in men and 262 in women.²
- There are continuing advances in the clinical management of lung cancer.
- However, lung cancer has often reached an advanced stage by the time symptoms appear. Relative survival following diagnosis remains very poor in comparison to other cancers.³
- Australian data for the period 1992-97 found that only 11% of males and 14% of females diagnosed with lung cancer survive five years or more.³

Causes of Lung Cancer

- Lung cancer is primarily a preventable disease.
- Cigarette smoking is by far the main cause of lung cancer, with 90% of cases in men and 65% in women caused by smoking.⁴
- The risk of lung cancer increases with years of smoking and amount smoked.
- Lung cancer occurs most often in 'older' persons as it usually takes decades for cancer-causing agents in tobacco smoke to take full effect.⁵
- Younger people can also develop lung cancer but it is rare. Less than 1% of lung cancers occur in people under the age of 40.³
- What is more, non-smokers can also get lung cancer.
- Evidence is now conclusive that exposure to second hand smoke is a cause of lung cancer in non-smokers.⁶
- Other factors known to increase lung cancer risk for non-smokers (and smokers) include



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occupational exposure to certain industrial carcinogens including asbestos, radon, arsenic, nickel and chromium. However, in industrialised nations such exposures are well controlled.⁷

- Some genetic factors may influence a person's lung cancer risk. Genetic susceptibility is thought to play a greater role in those who develop lung cancer at an early age.⁸
- Studies suggest that women may be at increased risk of lung cancer, though there is much debate around this and the possible explanations. Exposure to second hand smoke may be a cause in some cases. Other theories suggest differences between men and women in: metabolism of carcinogens; repair of DNA damage from carcinogens; genetic mutations associated with lung cancer; and hormonal influences on lung tumour growth. This area warrants further research, but it should be remembered that smoking is by far the main cause of lung cancer in both women and men.⁹

Benefits of Quitting for Lung Cancer Risk

- Quitting smoking has major and immediate benefits at any age. Research shows that the risk of dying from lung cancer at 75 is reduced by 87.5% if a person quits at 30, by 81% if quitting occurs at 40, 62.5% at 50 and 37.5% at 60.¹⁰
- It is estimated that if all people in Western Australia who currently smoke decided to quit smoking, there would be 3,100 fewer cases of lung cancer over the next 25 years, which means that 2,625 lives would be saved from this condition alone.¹¹
- For information about lung cancer, call the Cancer Council Helpline on 13 11 20.

- For help to quit smoking, call the Quitline on 13 7848 which offers free information and confidential counselling.
- The Cancer Council Western Australia also offers *Fresh Start* courses that are run in workplaces and the community. If you are interested in attending a course, call the Quitline or the Cancer Council Helpline to find out where courses are running. You can also access information at www.cancerwa.asn.au/prevention/tobacco.

¹ AIHW (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) & AACR (Australasian Association of Cancer Registries) 2007. *Cancer in Australia: an overview, 2006*. Cancer series no.37. Cat. No. CAN 32. Canberra: AIHW

² Threlfall, TJ & Thompson JR 2007, *Cancer incidence and mortality in Western Australia, 2006*, Department of Health, Western Australia, Perth. Statistical series number 82

³ AIHW & AACR 2001, *Cancer survival in Australia, 2001. Part 1: National summary statistics*. AIHW cat. no. CAN 13. AIHW, Canberra, (Cancer Series No. 18).

⁴ Ridolfo, B & Stevenson, C 2001. *The quantification of drug-caused morbidity and mortality in Australia 1998*, AIHW, Canberra.

⁵ AIHW 2005. *Mortality over the twentieth century in Australia: trends and patterns in major causes of death*. Mortality Surveillance Series no. 4. AIHW cat. no. PHE73. AIHW, Canberra.

⁶ International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) 2004, *Tobacco smoke and involuntary smoking*. IARC Monographs on the Evaluation of Carcinogenic Risks to Humans, Vol. 83, IARC, Lyon, France.

⁷ Alberg, AJ and Samet JM 2003, 'Epidemiology of lung cancer', *Chest*, vol. 123 (1 Suppl), pp. 21S-49S.

⁸ American Cancer Society 2006, *American Cancer Society responds to the death of Dana Reeve*, online, http://www.cancer.org/docroot/MED/MED_0.asp (Press Room).

⁹ Thomas, L et al. 2005, 'Lung cancer in women: emerging differences in epidemiology, biology and therapy', *Chest*, vol. 128 (1), pp. 370-81.

¹⁰ Peto, R et al. 2000, 'Smoking, smoking cessation, and lung cancer in the UK since 1950: combination of national statistics with two case-control studies', *British Medical Journal*, vol. 321 (7257), pp. 323-9.

¹¹ Department of Health 2000. (unpublished), *Estimated number of smoking caused deaths, Australia 1998 (by the year of registration)*, Health Information Centre, Health Department of WA, Perth.